

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A device for determining the instant a vehicle makes contact with an impact object, wherein the device is configured in such a way that the device determines the instant of contact by approximating a signal (20) derived from an acceleration signal (10) using a function (21).
2. The device as recited in Claim 1, wherein the device for producing the signal (20) filters the acceleration signal (10) or integrates the same once or twice.
3. The device as recited in Claim 1 or 2, wherein the device additionally takes an impact velocity (11) into account when determining the instant of contact.
4. The device as recited in Claim 3, wherein the device determines the impact velocity (11) as a function of the vehicle's own velocity.
5. The device as recited in Claim 3 or 4, wherein the device determines the impact velocity (11) as a function of a surrounding-field signal.
6. The device as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein the device approximates the signal (20) using at least two threshold values (SW1, SW2, SW3, SW4).
7. The device as recited in one of the preceding claims, wherein the device uses a quadratic function (21).
8. The device as recited in Claim 7, wherein the device determines the instant of contact from a vertex of the quadratic function (21).
9. The device as recited in Claim 8, wherein the device takes the impact velocity into account linearly in the determination of the instant of contact.